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Check Us Out!

Lessons From a Year of Small Wins

January has a way of making us feel like everything needs to change all at once. New goals. New habits. A fresh start by Monday. But looking back on the past year, one of the most valuable lessons I have been reminded of is that real improvement rarely happens in big, dramatic moments. It happens quietly, day after day, often when no one is watching.

Over the past year, I have been especially impressed watching my two older boys commit themselves to going to the gym on a daily basis. They did not start with bold declarations or unrealistic expectations. They simply started showing up. And then they kept showing up.

At first, the changes were subtle. A little more strength. A little more endurance. A bit more confidence. Over time, those small efforts added up to real and noticeable progress in their health, fitness, and overall mindset. What stands out to me most is not how much stronger they have become physically, but how they understood that improvement does not happen overnight.



What has impressed me even more is that they have come to understand the process as a whole. Going to the gym alone is not enough. Strength and muscle are built not just through workouts, but through a healthy diet and consistent sleep. They understand that one does not work without the others. You cannot out-train poor nutrition. You cannot expect progress without proper rest. It is all connected.

In a world where instant gratification is everywhere, they have learned something that many adults still struggle with: that consistency matters. Results are earned, not rushed. Even on days when they do not feel like going to the gym, they go anyway. Not because they are motivated, but because they are committed.

That distinction is important. Motivation comes and goes. Commitment is what carries you through the days when enthusiasm is low and excuses are easy to find. Watching them push through those moments has been a reminder that progress is often built on the unremarkable days, not the highlight reel moments.

This lesson has stayed with me throughout the year, both professionally and personally. In my work, the best outcomes rarely come from shortcuts or last-minute efforts. They come from preparation, patience, and doing the small things right, over and over again. The same is true at home, in relationships, and in taking care of ourselves.

Every January, it is easy to feel pressure to overhaul everything at once. New routines. New priorities. New versions of ourselves. But the past year has reinforced for me that lasting change is more sustainable when it is gradual. Small improvements, repeated

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consistently, are far more powerful than big promises that fade by February.

That mindset also brings a sense of relief. When we stop expecting perfection, we allow ourselves room to grow. We focus on progress instead of outcomes. We learn to appreciate the value of showing up, fueling ourselves properly, and giving our bodies and minds the rest they need.

As we begin a new year, my hope for all of us is that we take a calmer approach to improvement. Pick one thing worth working on. Commit to the process, not the result. Trust that small, consistent choices add up over time.

Because real change does not happen overnight. It happens one workout, one meal, one good night of sleep, and one ordinary day at a time.

Here's to a healthy, steady, and meaningful New Year!

-Brian O'Connor

The Power of Hearing in Healing

HOW TO MODEL CONFIDENT CARE FOR KIDS

No matter what station of life someone is in, they deserve to feel safe. Of course, physical safety is always paramount, but what about **emotional** safety? In our often busy and complex lives, ensuring our loved ones feel safe on the inside can be overlooked. This is especially true if you're a working parent, juggling obligations to your young ones and your own sense of stability and peace of mind.



Here are two quick but valuable tips for making the journey emotionally safer for you and them.

Not every problem requires a solution.

We've all had days when we need to vent to someone close to us. While the recipient of our woes may immediately start suggesting ways to solve the problem, all we really want is for someone to hear and understand us. It's the same with children, who sometimes just crave the security of someone who listens to them. In these instances, saying, "Wow, you've had a tough day," may be more helpful than proclaiming, "Here's what you're doing wrong and how to fix it." Of course, adding something that elicits a smile or chuckle from a stressed child never hurts. Above all, be sure to validate their emotions. Even if their negative

situation seems minuscule by adult standards, acknowledging it may still mean the world to **them** in that moment.

Calm can be found in chaos.

It's a Monday morning. Everyone is running late, the toast is burnt, a glass of orange juice has just spilled all over the kitchen table, and your little ones are talking a mile a minute. While these moments may make you want to shout on the inside, keeping a calm, gentle demeanor **outside** will help reduce tension for your kids before they head off to school and set a strong example of how to react under pressure. Frustrating situations are inevitable, but how we respond to them is our choice.

By remaining calm and showing compassion even in challenging times, we comfort our children as much as we show them how to comfort themselves.

From Rock Bottom to Reinvention EDISON'S IRON WILL

Despite his rightful place in history books as one of the world's greatest minds, legendary inventor Thomas Edison was a consistent failure ... and that was a great thing.

By the time Edison died in 1931 at 84, he had experienced a life steeped in as many devastating defeats as world-changing ambitions. That he's remembered today for his scientific milestones and not his epic misfires represents the spirit of "failing forward," the concept of embracing failure as an opportunity to pursue new ideas and directions for success.

"I have not failed," Edison famously insisted. "I have just found 10,000 ways that won't work."

Here's one example of how he turned a significant misfire into an unmitigated triumph.

From Iron to Insolvency

Edison held more than 1,000 patents in his lifetime, and many of his inventions toward the end of the 1800s relied heavily on iron as a source material. When the cost of the metal began to rise, he attempted to address the problem by investing more than 10 years and \$2 million in his own iron mining operation in northern New Jersey. Unfortunately for the maverick inventor, several other iron plants launched around the same time, which caused the value of iron to drop considerably and led to severe financial losses.

Cement Seals Success

Instead of accepting defeat when his iron operation went under, Edison turned his attention to another critical material: cement. While running his iron mine, he regularly sold waste sand to cement makers for additional revenue. Seeing an opportunity to expand further into this market, he launched the Edison Portland Cement Company, repurposing



equipment and technology he had used for iron mining. The venture was a huge success, allowing Edison to pay off his massive debts and become one of the leading forces behind the use of cement in American infrastructure.

While the catastrophic failure of his iron mining endeavor would have crushed most entrepreneurs, Edison thrived by pivoting to new ventures. He never gave up. His inventions proved his brilliance, but his fearlessness in the face of failure demonstrated his resilience.



TAKE A *BREAK*



SLOW COOKER BIRRIA TACOS

INGREDIENTS

- 3 dried guajillo chiles
- 2 dried ancho chiles
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves
- 1 (14.5-oz) can diced tomatoes
- 3 lbs beef chuck roast
- 2 cups beef broth
- 2 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 1 tbsp dried oregano
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tsp salt
- Pepper, to taste
- Corn tortillas
- Fresh cilantro and diced onion for garnish

DIRECTIONS

1. Soak dried chiles in hot water for 15 minutes.
2. Process chiles, onion, garlic, and tomatoes in a blender until smooth.
3. Place beef in a slow cooker and pour the chili mixture over it.
4. Add beef broth, vinegar, oregano, cumin, bay leaves, salt, and pepper.
5. Cook on low for 8–10 hours or until the beef is tender.
6. Shred the beef using forks, then mix back into the sauce.
7. Fry tortillas in oil until crispy, then assemble tacos as desired.

Inspired by SimpleWhisk.com

FAST-FOOD FOLLY

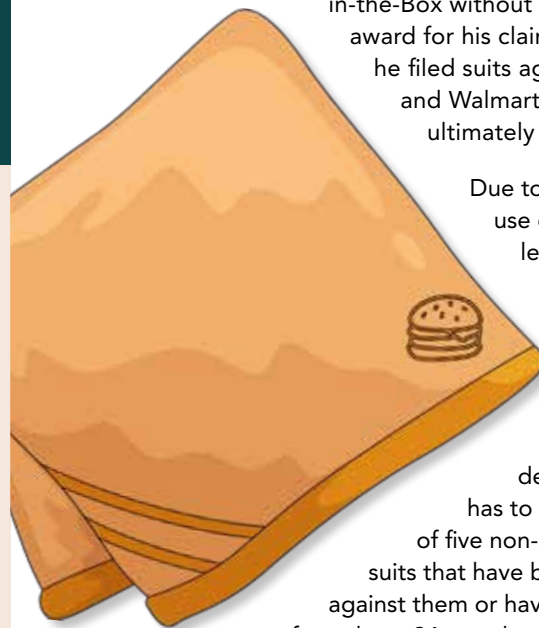
A Napkin Sparks a Legal Storm

There are several ways to become a millionaire in this country, but suing a fast-food chain over a napkin isn't one of them.

In 2014, a McDonald's restaurant in Pacoima, California, became the focus of a national discussion on how the legal system addressed frivolous lawsuits. It all started with a customer named Webster Lucas, who complained to the manager when he discovered that he had been given only one napkin with his meal. Lucas claimed the manager had "developed a nasty attitude and mumbled a few words" before cursing at him. He also alleged that the manager's behavior was racially motivated.

The verbal altercation prompted Lucas to file a **\$1.5 million** suit against the McDonald's Corporation and the Pacoima store's manager and general manager for (as reported by NBC News at the time) mental anguish, emotional distress, and discrimination. Despite being offered free food from the corporation to make things right, Lucas moved forward with his litigation.

Interestingly, this wasn't the first time Lucas had sued a major restaurant for an unsatisfactory experience. According to court documents obtained by NBC News, he had previously filed two separate suits against Jack-in-the-Box without receiving an award for his claims. Additionally, he filed suits against Denny's and Walmart, which were ultimately dismissed.



Due to his habitual use of the California legal system, Lucas became known as a "vexatious litigant." To earn this dubious designation, one has to file a minimum of five non-small claims suits that have been settled against them or have been pending for at least 24 months without a hearing or trial. Additionally, an individual can be deemed a "vexatious litigant" by repeatedly filing or relitigating meritless cases.

Despite online reports to the contrary, court documents confirm that Lucas' case against McDonald's was dismissed by the end of 2014. Unsurprisingly, little has been heard of him in the California legal system since.



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COSMIC COUNSEL

Who Makes the Rules in Space?

The phrase “space lawyer” may conjure images of an intergalactic courtroom setting in a “Star Trek” film, but the term and profession are rooted in reality here on Earth.

Simply put, space lawyers are legal professionals specializing in international law and drafting agreements between countries regarding their activities throughout our galaxy. Instead of brokering peace treaties between humans and Klingons, these attorneys work to establish policies that outline rules and obligations nations must follow when conducting themselves beyond our clouds.

For example, treaties negotiated by space lawyers were instrumental in getting the Soviet Union to spend millions to clean up radioactive debris deposited over northern Canada by its Cosmos 954 satellite in the late 1970s. Utilizing Article 7 of the Outer

Space Treaty (via the 1972 Space Liability Convention), the Canadian government argued that the Soviet Union was on the hook to cover the majority of the cost of Operation Morning Light, an extensive cleanup operation by the U.S. and Canada



to remove nearly 50,000 square miles of hazardous material dropped from space.

Thanks to space lawyers, no nation can claim ownership of Earth (or any other planet), the moon, or any other entity discovered in the galaxy. However, recent debates have raised an intriguing question: Who would own the **resources** derived from the moon or another planet? If Russia were to one day discover a life-saving nutrient on the moon’s surface, would it have the right to claim exclusive ownership of this medical marvel? Would this discovery need to be shared with other nations involved in space-related treaties?

While it may take years (or the invention of a good time-traveling warp drive) for us to resolve these questions, it’s clear we need space lawyers to tackle these and other questions in a legal frontier that no Earth-bound lawyer has pondered before!